

Living With Covid (Part 1)

"I was sick, and you visited me." Matthew 25:36 (paraphrase)

Sickness unlocks vaults of memory long closed. In my "afternoon nap" on the fourth day of my covid isolation after the Friar's Briar, I awoke remembering an incident from my childhood that needed to be healed with God's grace in Christ Jesus. In this telling, I pray you will absolve me that we may be mutually strengthened in faith, hope, and love through the Holy Spirit.

My counselor is teaching me how traumatic memories often induce painful sensations in the body; which woke me I do not know, but I needed the pain of Covid to help me into the painful memories I am sharing now. It was a late December Saturday afternoon, we were just about to go home from Fred Graham's Swamp when the Davidson Brothers arrived and challenged us to a game of shinny. They were two, we were three... "Here," Bryan said, "You take the good stick. You're better than we are!" He took my home-patched broken one and removed his skates to play goal. David and I did our best, but it was a rout. "Rematch tomorrow after church?" It was David's turn to use the good stick, but when we got to the swamp and were putting on our skates, I said, "Let me have the good stick. I'm better than you are." Sin is a matter of who uses which pronouns when. He was not happy when he handed it over, even more unhappy at my relentless criticism as we fell far behind again. However, God had a special way to bind us brothers together: sometime during the game, one of the Davidson Brothers broke the blade of our only good stick with a wicked slash! Their mocking laughter at our poor play didn't sting as much as our poverty: there would be no new stick for a long time, and no rematches either. How we rejoiced that Christmas when Uncle Alcis led us into a dark corner of the living room at the farm and there stood three brand new Victoriaville hockey sticks with our own puck taped to the blade! And he had even cleared a rink on their swamp with the tractor! How gently we played that long afternoon with our two sister-cousins and our new hockey sticks!

This Covid-induced memory has a sequel abounding in grace. Years later, Fred Graham's swamp froze over "like it used to when we were younger," vast ices winding far into the trees. "Why don't you boys go down and skate for a bit before supper?" Mom suggested. I dug my new Bauers out of my All-Star hockey bag (I still use them); David grabbed our shinny sticks, and Bryan picked up the scrapper "just in case." (How we used to argue about who was doing more shoveling!) After a while we stuck our sticks in the snowbank and just skated with the wind through the trees. On the way back we noticed a big family out on the ice near the road, but one of them, their oldest boy, was having a hard time on his skates. As we watched respectfully from a distance, we recognized the two Davidson brothers, and realized this was the whole family... including a physically and mentally disabled sibling we had never known before. Their joy together as they twirled him around the ice, all their love focused on his success and happiness, deeply moved and humbled us. Reconciliation comes in miraculous ways: when Mike Davidson had to give up hockey too soon for farming, he gave me his tote bag for ten bucks. That didn't mean we were friends, as I later found out. But that is another story of God's grace....

A Prayer for Living With Covid

Dear Lord, I didn't want to get Covid, but you knew I needed it so you could use it to unlock places in my soul needing your healing touch. Thank you for all the people who visited me with phone calls, texts, and emails while I was sick. Please be with everyone in a special way who lives with someone with covid. In Jesus' name. Amen